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SUBJ: MEDIA REACTION: INVOLVEMENT IN AFGHANISTAN AND IRAQ

¶1. Summary: An opinion piece titled "Obama Needs to Exert More" in state-owned English daily "The Rising Nepal," September 21, 2009 called for more results-oriented action from President Barack Obama to meet voters' expectations, especially in bringing normalcy to Afghanistan and Iraq. The piece is a summary of American involvement in these two countries. The writer claims that the protracted wars in both countries could be a "Mission Impossible" for foreign forces and that the failure to bring normalcy in Iraq and Afghanistan could pose serious problems to the governments involved, especially the American and British governments. The article also briefly mentions Washington's failure to bring Pyongyang to dialogue on the nuclear weapons issue.

¶2. Excerpts: " Even as the economy shows some signs of limping back to normalcy, President Barack Obama has a string of issues that need to be addressed with greater vigor for visibly positive results. When he won the presidential polls last November, despite an array of odds against him, and was formally sworn into office in January, he was hailed worldwide mostly for being the first black president of the United States. "

¶3. " The curiosity value was high; so too were the voters' expectations. While the economy has always been the No 1 concern and priority - politics, after all, is basically local - US involvement in a number of trouble spots in different parts of the world could affect his records before the 2012 presidential elections. "

¶4. " When he took office eight months ago, Obama indicated that his administration's special foreign policy focus would be on, among other issues, Afghanistan, Iraq, North Korea and Iran. The war in Iraq and Afghanistan is costing heavily in terms of casualties and loss of prestige and money for especially Washington. "

¶5. "Although some British newspapers have termed their country's involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq "Mission Incomplete", there are fears that things could be even worse. Were things to deteriorate, the foreign forces stations in these countries could find themselves engaged in a "Mission Impossible." The war has dragged on for eight years."

¶6. "... Syria, Cuba and Venezuela have also showed

the limits of even the world's best-equipped fighting forces. Obama once said that he was prepared to meet North Korean leader Kim Jong-Il if a situation demanded so. But so far Washington has not even been able to engage Pyongyang to holding a dialogue on the nuclear weapons issue."

17. "... Obama's popularity rating is no longer what it was in the first 100 days in office. Ups and downs in such ratings are to be taken in stride. But were the US troops to return home by the 2011 schedule while normalcy continued to elude the Iraqi people, American credibility would suffer heavily. If the Taliban in Afghanistan were to expand their strength and restrict the presence of the Kabul government in only the cities where, too, daily bomb blasts occur and people get killed, the governments involved in the war would face serious questions. The costs and the casualties of the foreign troops recorded in Iraq and Afghanistan will be issues of considerable consternation for especially the US and Britain that have made the largest and deepest commitment in terms of troop contributions and money. The Obama administration might not be unaware of this."

MOON